



**H-E-A-R-T, Inc.**  
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March 27, 2014

The Honorable Robert Goodlatte  
Chairman, Committee on Judiciary  
US House of Representatives  
2138 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Goodlatte:

I am writing to express my sincere gratitude for your leadership in introducing a HR 4323 to reauthorize the Debbie Smith DNA Backlog Elimination Act. As you know, this grant program provides critical funding to crime laboratories throughout the country as they continue to address backlogs of DNA evidence. In turn, this evidence is vital to law enforcement's ability to quickly, and accurately, identify the *right* suspect. But all too often, victims wait needlessly – months and sometimes years – for their cases to have DNA analysis completed. I know, from personal experience, how very painful this wait can be.

In 1989, I was kidnapped from my home while my husband Rob, a police officer, was sleeping upstairs. I was dragged into the woods behind Williamsburg, Virginia home and raped. After the sexual assault, I feared that my unknown attacker would return to further harm me or, even more unthinkable, my family. This fear was paralyzing.

The traumatic effect of the assault remained with me and my family for over six years, until my attacker's DNA sample was finally removed from the state's backlog and included in the national DNA database. He was immediately linked to my rape, and subsequently convicted of rape, abduction, robbery, burglary and larceny. He was sentenced to two life terms plus 25 years in prison.

The years I spent waiting for justice can never be returned to me. I was suicidal. I was present, but never fully in the moment. I was always afraid and constantly looking over my shoulder. But other victims do not have to go through this. We can do better.

This federal DNA grant program is so incredibly important in making sure that crime labs receive the vital resources that they need to process these cases. I have been to these laboratories. I have seen the rooms filled, ceiling to floor, with untested rape kits.

I have met the hard working men and women who work tirelessly on these violent cases. They, too, deserve our support.

I know you understand that the true benefits of reauthorizing this program will ultimately be measured not in terms of dollars and cents, but in the human costs of eliminating delays in bringing criminals to justice and hope to victims. For every case that remains unanalyzed, a violent criminal remains on the streets – endangering the public and our own police officers who are hunting them down.

Once again, for myself, and on behalf of the thousands of rape victims still awaiting justice, you have my most sincere thanks for agreeing to champion this incredibly important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "Debbie Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Debbie Smith